

**Governor's Rural Affairs Council
Meeting Minutes
December 4, 2015
Department of Agriculture
Illinois State Fair Grounds
Springfield, Illinois**

1. The meeting was called to order by Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti at 11:04 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Member Agencies Present

Illinois Department on Aging, Burt Weber
Illinois Department of Agriculture, Rebecca Clark
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Steve Ettinger
Illinois Department Employment Security, Alicia Harris
Illinois Community College Board, Jeff Newell
Illinois Housing Development Authority, Bill Pluta
Southern Illinois University, Nina Antoniotti and Kim Sanders
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Christopher Merrett
Illinois Finance Authority, Patrick Evans
Rural Partners, Blanche Shoup
Illinois Department of Human Services, Francisco Alvarado
Illinois Department of Public Health, Don Jones
University of Illinois Extension, Chris Casey

Not Present: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Agricultural Association (Farm Bureau)

Citizen Members Present

Heather Hampton-Knodle
Sonja Reece
Luke Allen
Larry Richards
Todd Kaeb

Not Present: Doug Hanks

Nonvoting Members Present

Norman Walzer, NIU
Colleen Callahan, USDA

Lt. Governor's Office: Susan Bence, Kaitlin Kinser, Ennedy Rivera.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti asked that anyone who wished to comment during the Public Comment period register with Kaitlin Kinser.

3. Approval of Minutes of the September 24, 2015, Governor's Rural Affairs Council meeting.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Heather Hampton-Knodle/Seconded by Luke Allen/Motion Carried

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti welcomed the council members and guests. She reported that she has been very busy visiting all the counties of the state. She has been in 101 counties to date and would visit the 102nd county that afternoon.

4. Honorable Raymond Poe, Illinois Director of Agriculture

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti welcomed Raymond Poe, the Director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Director Poe stated that he was honored to be serve as director and that he intended to continue to be active in the State Fair. He further stated that his main job as director is to promote the agriculture industry in Illinois. His goal is also to continue the work he began as a legislator to establish a foundation dedicated to the State Fair. The Lt. Governor stated that the administration is committed to appointing agency directors who are subject matter experts in their agency's area of responsibility.

5. Panel Discussion – Broadband/Internet Accessibility in Rural Communities

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti reported that as she has been traveling the state and meeting with residents of rural communities she has heard several recurring themes, including the need for economic development, lack of access to health care, and the lack of access to broadband. For this reason, she asked four professionals involved in the issue of broadband to speak to the Council.

Matt Johnson, Vice President of Shawnee Communications, discussed the challenges facing small providers in rural areas. He mentioned that education of customers on the importance and uses of broadband was very important. He also stated that rural communities need to make a commitment to expanding broadband because the providers are not eligible to apply for many grant programs and must partner with local communities. Unfortunately, expanding broadband access takes money and providers are facing an uncertain future. For example, the Universal Service Fund is tied up in Congress.

Heather Hampton-Knodle asked how communities can incentivize providers to expand access in an area when it is cost prohibitive. Mr. Johnson answered that community leaders should engage with providers at the highest level of the organization; however, it is important to remember that providers are bound by existing tariffs and laws.

Todd Kaeb asked what trends drive service expansion. Mr. Johnson answered that concentrations of residents, business, and large institutions, as well as economic development drive services expansion.

Greg Janes, Director of Marketing for Telepharm, reported on his company's model for using broadband to retain or bring new pharmacies to rural communities. Telepharm works with brick and mortar stores and staffs them with pharmacy techs. These stores are serviced by a centrally-located pharmacist who supervises the techs and interacts with patients via broadband. The company is currently operating 18 telepharmacies in Illinois and plans to have 30 by the end of the year. Telepharmacies help to retain residents in rural communities and helps local health providers be more effective. To qualify for a telepharmacy, a community must have access to high speed broadband.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti asked what else the State of Illinois can do to help promote this model. Mr. Janes answered that Illinois is already a model in regulation for telepharmacy. However there is a long wait for inspection for the telepharmacies and they can't open until they are inspected. Telepharmacies also require capital to open and communities can use help with that.

Heather Hampton-Knodle asked what the start-up costs were for a telepharmacy. Mr. Janes answered that these included broadband and related hardware, working capital, and inventory.

Patrick Evans asked who owns the telepharmacy. Mr. Janes answered that the original owner can continue to own the business or that Telepharm can own the business.

Christopher Merrett asked what role communities and community colleges can play. Mr. Janes answered that communities can help by providing start-up space, utilities, etc. Community colleges are important for training pharmacy techs.

Dr. Nina Antonoitti, Executive Director, Telehealth and Clinical Outreach, Southern Illinois University, spoke about the telehealth program at SIU. Telehealth provides access to medical care and medical specialties to rural residents located far from medical facilities or those with limited mobility. Telehealth allows patients to stay in their homes longer and lead to better health outcomes because patients are able to access the care they need. Dr. Antonoitti stated that telehealth requires a great deal of bandwidth because the large amount of information that is being transmitted and because of the speeds required. She added that telehealth cannot be effective in areas without high speed Internet. This can be very expensive. There are also still some restrictions on Medicaid reimbursement and private health plans do not reimburse for telehealth services. The use of allied health professionals is also not reimbursed and there are no policies for homebased telehealth services.

Sonia Reese stated that the Advocate System has a hospital in Eureka that is connected to a specialist in Chicago and that provides support for local doctors. Dr. Antonoitti stated that studies on physician retention show that telehealth helps local doctors collaborate

with specialists, helps in the supervision of trainees, and helps with the recruitment of doctors.

Heather Hampton-Knodle asked if Dr. Antoinoitti could project the growth of telehealth in the future. Dr. Antoinoitti answered that she expected telehealth use to double every year. She stated that health care is becoming a model that moves care around to patients rather than moving patients around.

Jeff Newell, Deputy Director, Student Services and Technology, Illinois Community College Board, reported that community colleges have good access to broadband but that students do not. He stated that while there is much media-rich content available to colleges, students cannot always access it. This means that the colleges cannot take advantage of this content because it would be unfair to students without broadband access. Mr. Newell added that there are colleges in rural areas that cannot get enough students in a class and students who cannot afford to commute long distances to attend classes. He stated that the use of a hybrid delivery method works and that broadband has expanded the opportunities for high school students for dual credit courses. Colleges are able to share courses through the ILCO system.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti asked how the community colleges can train pharmacy techs. Blanche Shoup stated that there is a need for funding for training. Ms. Shoup also asked if maps of broadband availability were still available. Karen Poncin answered that those maps were still available on the Broadband Illinois website.

6. Member Updates

Don Jones, Illinois Department of Public Health, reported that IDPH has recently revised the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP). The plan is available on the Department's website.

Kim Sanders, SIU School of Medicine, reported the SIU is providing outreach services to southern Illinois. Some of the issues they are working on include medical transportation, childhood obesity, and a geriatric workforce investment program.

Steve Ettinger, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, reported that Illinois' deer harvest was very successful this year and is up 11 percent from last year.

Alicia Harris, Illinois Department of Employment Security, reported that her agency is working with DCEO on regional planning groups and is using this process to identify issues throughout the state.

Heather Hampton-Knodle, Citizen Member, reported that the Women in Agriculture is holding a workshop in February. She also announced that Montgomery County's CEO program is completing its first year and is holding a trade show on April 26. Ms. Hampton-Knodle also stated that Montgomery County is filing suit against the State for funds that have not been disbursed.

Rebecca Clark, Illinois Department of Agriculture, announced that soy bean harvest levels are even with last year's levels and that the Department is engaged in a search for a State Fair Manager.

Sonia Reese, Citizen Member, announce that State Farm has provided funding for training staff to work with schools to promote STEM education.

Luke Allen, Citizen Member, announced that five Illinois high schools have added new ag programs this year. He added that there is not a shortage of ag teachers in Illinois.

Chris Casey, University of Illinois Extension, announced a series of webinars to train local government offices.

Burt Weber, Illinois Department on Aging, announced the creation of the No Wrong Door program for social service-allied agencies. This program will allow seniors to access services at any state agency office they visit.

Bill Pluta, Illinois Housing Development Authority, announced that the First Time Homeowners program served a record number of individuals. He also announce that the Governor's Conference on Housing will be held in Chicago March 29 and 30. He stated that HUD is providing funding for IHDA to promote internet access in the housing it sponsors.

Colleen Callahan, USDA-RD, announced that USDA has held workshops on the Distance Learning and Telemedicine and the Community Connect grant programs throughout the state. She state that St. John's Hospital recently received a DLT grant.

Blanche Shoup, Rural Partners, announce that RP is sponsoring a series of workshops on the transfer of wealth throughout the state. She added that Hancock County has begun offering the CEO program to its high school students.

Patrick Evans, Illinois Finance Authority, announced that his agency is providing funding for the purchase of fire trucks to communities in need. He added that IFA is also offering loans to small communities impacted by the state's budget impasse.

Christopher Merrett, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, announced that the annual Rural Community Economic Development Conference will be held in Springfield on March 9 and 10.

Francisco Alvarado, Illinois Department of Human Services, announce that his agency is working to address access barriers to services in rural counties.

7. New Business

a. EMS Summit Committee Report

Kim Sanders, Southern Illinois University, reported that the EMS Summit is scheduled for April 5 in Springfield at the Memorial center for Innovation. The working group is putting together an agenda and expects the Summit to attract more than 100 participants.

b. Discussion – Developing Working Groups

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti announced the formation of four GRAC Working Groups: Economic Development, Workforce Development, Health Care, and Education. She asked that Council members consider which group they would like to serve on.

8. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Sonia Reese/Seconded by Bill Pluta/Motion Carried.